



ED LEVITT

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The Fun Board

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Oakland may never have a domed stadium, but Charley Finley's Athletics won't have to take a rumble-seat to Houston in the scoreboard department.

The A's million-dollar baby, described by its builders as the "world's first computer-controlled scoreboard," was unveiled yesterday — just one week before it goes into action when the Athletics open the season against the White Sox.

Finley's Fun Board, as the A's people are calling it, is the most unusual electronic monster in this goofy era of the exploding home run.

It can do everything but fry an egg. Or make a martini. Or win a pennant.

And you don't even have to put a nickel in the machine.

It will, at the press of a button, provide enough instantaneous information to please the most insatiable appetite of any statistical nut in the Western Hemisphere.



This isn't all. One of the two 126-foot-long scoreboards will sort of give you the feeling you're at a drive-in movie — especially when it comes on with an animated cartoon in black and white.

No, kiddies, it won't be Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck. Instead, this one will feature the A's mule kicking its heels after Reggie Jackson, or some other Oakland player, smashes a home run.

And there's more. The 23,000 light bulbs will be blinking enough messages to keep the fans awake should the baseball tend to put them to sleep.

Such celebrated cliches as "Charge" . . . "Go-Go-Go" . . . "Sock It To 'Em" . . . will be emblazoned in 24-foot-high letters—with sound effects, yet!

The sound was not turned on yesterday at the Coliseum, and it was a good thing. Some of the newsmen present looked as though they could not have endured too many popping noises along about 12:30 in the afternoon.

Nothing is perfect, though, including a million-dollar scoreboard.

There are still a few things to be smoothed out in the total operation of Finley's Fun Board.

But, after all, this is spring training. The A's aren't ready to go yet either — and they've had six weeks of drills under their belts.

The scoreboard had no spring training. Considering it didn't even have a single shot in the batting cage, we thought the mechanical rookie did quite well yesterday in its shakedown run.



It all sounds delightful except that, what with all those flashing lights and exploding rockets, some future-day astronauts are apt to roar in for a crash landing believing they have located Saturn.

Nonetheless, it must be said again that progress is wonderful.

The happiest part is that when the A's do something nice — like knock Denny McLain out of the box, or pitch a shutout, or win a game — the Oakland Coliseum will suddenly become the liveliest spot in Northern California.

Sneer if you must, but the fans will probably love it, just as they do in Houston, Anaheim, Chicago, Cleveland and Kansas City, where other mechanical monsters have delighted the paying public.

Finley may be a little kookie. And his revolving managerial setup may not be the best thing — particularly if you're the manager he just let go.

But the man is determined to keep his customers entertained. If he can't do it with brilliant baseball, he just may succeed with his flashing scoreboard.